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26 September 1979

STATINTL

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Director of Central Intelligence

FROM :



SUBJECT : Policy and Decisionmaking in a Crisis: Lessons
from Thirteen Days

1. In light of the meetings you will be attending over the next days and weeks, I took a look at Robert Kennedy's Memoir of the Cuban Missile Crisis. Two lessons struck me as relevant to today:

-Debate (such as proposed by Mr. Cutler) was essential

-Participants in the "ExCom" spent more time discussing the issues than they anticipated

-This opened up more options than previously on the table

-The President limited his involvement and this tended to permit people to speak more freely (creatively?)

-Only in the middle of the process (and after first meeting with the President) did the group agree on a procedure to develop recommendations. See Tab A for highlights)

-The criteria for policy then remains relevant now:

-Whatever actions taken "should leave us in control of events"

-JFK was clear about what he wanted to avoid (highlights at Tab B)

-Always give Russians more time to respond than crisis atmosphere, domestic political constraints appeared to allow

Attachment C is RFK's chapter on "Some of The Things We Learned."

2. With respect to the issue of you and others being pressured (by the media blitz) into moving more quickly than is warranted:

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- This administration/President has shown itself willing to back off until it had its act together (e.g. energy speech)
- Deliberations over US options in the '62 crisis lasted five full days and it took the "ExCom" three full days to discover new options (e.g. the blockade)



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Attachments

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